

Writing Assignment: The Voyage to Mars

The Story: Imagine that the U.S. Congress is debating whether to send people to Mars for an exploratory mission. There are many pros and cons about such a mission, and your senator is undecided.

The Assignment: Using the format of a letter to your U. S. senator, argue either for or against a U.S. mission to Mars. Research and summarize between one and three different challenges of going to Mars (there are many!). For each challenge you address, **explain why it is challenging and what it would take to solve the challenge**. Once you have described the challenges in detail (so that your senator is as well-informed as you are), argue whether the benefit of making this journey is worth the costs. Be as convincing as you can! Some examples of challenges are:

- availability of food/water
- extreme temperature/atmosphere/weather
- technology hasn't been developed yet
- travel time
- the possibility of returning home
- overall astronaut health and safety
- psychological and sociological impact on astronauts
- there are many more issues too! I can't possibly list them all.

The Details:

- Length: 1400 words (approx. 5 pages double spaced)
- Topic submission deadline: **Wednesday Oct 27** (on Blackboard, see below)
- First Draft deadline: **Wednesday November 3** (on Blackboard)
- Final Draft deadline: **TBA** (on Blackboard)
- Citations: give the URLs of any websites, or provide any other sources you use, at the end of the paper. Do not use MLA or any other format.
- Grading: see the rubric on the opposite side of this page. Topic submission will be 10%, rough draft 25%, and final draft 65% of the grade.

Topic Submission: Before you write your paper, choose maximum three challenges to write about (one or two challenges is fine, but no more than three). **For each challenge**, submit **one detailed paragraph** and **two references** you found which give some useful information for writing about the challenge. Submit on Blackboard using the link provided.

The Purpose of this Assignment: In this assignment you will research a set of facts, and then critically analyze the facts to construct a logical argument.

Voyage to Mars Writing Rubric

Evaluation Areas	Points	Description
Coherence		
Relevancy / Following Instructions	4	Does the paper answer the main questions that are asked in the instructions? Is it clear what the point of the paper is? Does the paper stay on topic and address the main point, without wandering?
Structure/Flow	4	Is there a introduction, body, and conclusion? Does the paper flow chronologically? Are there good transitions between paragraphs? Does each paragraph represent a main idea?
Content		
Examples: challenges	3	Do you explain each challenge in detail? Are all of the facts you present correct?
Examples: overcoming the challenges	3	Do you explain what it takes to overcome each challenge in detail? Are all of the facts you present correct?
Conclusion	2	Do you draw a reasonable conclusion based on the points you presented?
Argument	2	Do you convincingly argue your case to your senator?
Plagiarism	3	Plagiarism less than 30% (as reported by TurnItIn)
Structure		
Length	3	Meet or exceed word count: 3 80%-99% of word count: 2 50%-79% of word count: 1 less than 50%: 0
Spelling/Grammar	1	Are there few spelling/grammar mistakes?
Citations	1	Are there URLs at the end of the paper? Are the citations relevant?
Format	2	Does the paper take the form of a letter?
Total Points:	28	